
ETHICS

A. COURSE RATIONALE AND PHILOSOPHY

The study of the acceptable standards of a society is a component of schooling that is essential in helping students to become contributing, responsible and ethically mature persons. Humans, by their very nature, are moral beings. On a daily basis, it is necessary to confront decisions, choices and judgements that involve degrees of “rightness” and “wrongness”. Schools have a role in providing students with the “tools” necessary to improve their decision-making abilities. The importance of this area of education can be obscured by its complexities. However, the schools are, inevitably, a source of ethical education. The choice is whether or not it will be an explicit part of curriculum. By providing students with a clearer understanding of community values, the relationships of these to personal values, and the skills necessary for dealing with issues, the school can play a supportive role to other institutions in the community, such as the family, in the ethical education of young people.

The Grade 8 Ethics course is designed to ensure integration of the knowledge of societal values and the development of positive personal values.

The secondary school has a responsibility for encouraging “standards and examples of behaviour” which will contribute to the “well being” of society (*Secondary Education in Alberta* Policy Statement, June 1985, page 17). In addition, the professional staffs of secondary schools in this province have a responsibility to serve as “models” of behaviour for their students (page 17). This increased emphasis on the ethical aspect of education is evident in the creation of a new Grade 8 complementary ethics course, “teaching about the values of the community” (page 23).

Junior high students are at various stages of emotional, physical, ethical and cognitive development which necessitates that varying instructional strategies be used. Although they are at various stages, all students, if they are to personalize values and act ethically, must be given the opportunity to experience, in a concrete manner, the positive changes that can result from ethical behaviour.

The aim of the ethics course is to help students to become more thoughtful, to think of the interests of others, and to see the ethical implications in their daily lives.

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL

- To assist young people in their growth as ethical persons who are able to contribute to the well-being of all individuals and the community.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop an understanding of community values.
- To foster student commitment to common ethical values such as respect, responsibility, fairness/justice, tolerance, honesty, kindness, forgiveness, commitment to democratic ideals, loyalty.
- To develop the ability to recognize consequences of making ethical decisions.

C. CONTENT

1. COMPONENTS OF THE GRADE 8 ETHICS COURSE

The content of the Grade 8 Ethics course is divided into three parts: Establishing the Challenge; The Community; and Social Responsibility.

PART 1: ESTABLISHING THE CHALLENGE

This section will introduce students to the topic of ethics. They will be involved in arriving at working definitions of ethics and values, practising decision-making skills as well as planning and carrying out activities that make a difference in the lives of others. Nine common ethical values (respect, responsibility, fairness/justice, tolerance, honesty, kindness, forgiveness, commitment to democratic ideals, and loyalty) will be presented to students for their study and examination. These nine ethical values are based on the ethical/moral characteristics outlined in the list of “Desirable Personal Characteristics” (*Junior High School Handbook*). In addition, students will have the opportunity to examine these and other values through the following perspectives:

Traditional/Historical

Many values are reflected historically through traditions represented by things such as religious teachings, laws, or the lives of historical persons. Examining values from this perspective will provide students with a better understanding of how some values have their basis within the historical or traditional part of our society.

Cultural/Ethnic

Values may be derived from membership in a particular cultural or ethnic group. Students study values from the perspectives of various cultural groups in order to contribute to a better understanding of their own community.

Societal/Community

Within this perspective, students will examine values that appear to be generally accepted by their community and which may lead to greater understanding of societal values.

Personal

All of the foregoing perspectives contribute to the understanding and development of an individual’s personal values. These values are taught and reinforced by the home, religious institutions, and other community agencies, including the school. Personal commitment to particular values is a developmental process and results from opportunities to examine, discuss, reflect and act on values within a variety of settings.

PART 2: THE COMMUNITY

In this part, students will study a minimum of two modules. Each module will emphasize particular values examined in Part 1, and will focus on institutions or segments within the community. All four perspectives (Traditional/Historical, Cultural/Ethnic, Societal/Community, Personal) are incorporated into each of the modules. Although specific values are emphasized within each module, this is not to the exclusion of other values. Modules include:

<p>Winning and Losing</p> <p>Values to be emphasized:</p> <p>Fairness/Justice, Loyalty</p>	<p>Fairness and the Law</p> <p>Values to be emphasized:</p> <p>Fairness/Justice</p>
<p>Messages in Media</p> <p>Values to be emphasized:</p> <p>Honesty, Responsibility</p>	<p>Religion and Values</p> <p>Values to be emphasized:</p> <p>Respect, Tolerance</p>

PART 3: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

This part of the course will focus on the responsibility of students to reflect on their experiences during the course and to make plans for future positive contributions to the school, their peer group, their families, the community, and themselves.

2. SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

PART 1: ESTABLISHING THE CHALLENGE

A. Understanding Ethics

The student will be able to:

1. Arrive at a working definition of the term “ethics”.
2. Demonstrate an awareness that society is characterized by uncertainty, change and ambiguity.
3. Identify the ethical implications in issues.
4. Express personal convictions in productive group discussions of ethical issues.

B. Understanding Values

The student will be able to:

1. Arrive at a working definition of the term “values”.
2. Demonstrate an awareness that humans are social beings who require values and standards by which to live their lives.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of common community values such as respect, responsibility, fairness/justice, tolerance, honesty, kindness, forgiveness, commitment to democratic ideals, loyalty.

C. Perspectives on Values

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an appreciation of the influence of historical traditions and culture in the formation of personal values.

2. Demonstrate awareness that the society or community to which one belongs influences a person’s perspective on values.

3. Demonstrate awareness that each person may have unique perspectives on values.

D. Decision Making

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical implications of issues.
2. Examine and assess a variety of viewpoints on issues.
3. Examine evidence and consider alternatives before making a decision.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the consequences of one’s actions.
5. Express confidence in his or her own critical and creative thinking regarding ethical decision making.

E. Making a Difference

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate willingness to plan a project or activity that would contribute to the well-being of others.
2. Demonstrate willingness to be involved in the action to make the project or activity a reality.

PART 2: THE COMMUNITY

Module: Winning and Losing

Values to be emphasized: Fairness/Justice, Loyalty

The student will be able to:

1. Differentiate between situations of “winning” and “losing”.
2. Identify how the values of fairness and loyalty impact on winning and losing.
3. Identify examples of cooperation, participation and competition.
4. Demonstrate an awareness that cooperation is an essential characteristic of a community.
5. Demonstrate understanding of the different perceptions of winning in the community.
6. Develop respect for the feelings of self and others in winning or losing situations.
7. Accept members of the community who may differ physically, mentally or socially.
8. Demonstrate an awareness of the impact of the values of fairness/justice and loyalty on institutions such as school sports and social service organizations.
9. Demonstrate the skills necessary to contribute to the success of others.

Module: Fairness and the Law

Values to be emphasized: Fairness/Justice

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding that laws, like other kinds of rules, often develop from the values that people hold.

2. Demonstrate awareness that there are decisions made by the individual and those that are made by the community.
3. Identify, analyze and discuss issues having to do with fairness and the law.
4. Develop an appreciation for different viewpoints expressed on controversial legal issues.
5. Differentiate between criminal and civil law.
6. Develop a set of criteria that can be used to evaluate situations in terms of the fairness of the procedures which have evolved through the centuries and have been influenced by other cultures.
7. Identify and evaluate some of the different ways people can respond to laws they think are unfair.
8. Demonstrate an understanding that the law is essential to the well-being of the individual and society.
9. Demonstrate the value of fairness in an individual’s interaction with others.

Module: Religion and Values

Values to be emphasized: Respect, Tolerance

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding that communities and social organizations are created for the mutual growth and well-being of their members.
2. Demonstrate an understanding that there are interactive relationships among individuals, communities and segments of the community.

3. Demonstrate an awareness of the diversity of beliefs, customs, and celebrations that are present among religious groups.
4. Develop respect and tolerance for the beliefs of others.
5. Demonstrate the skills necessary to examine the values of respect and tolerance within the framework of religion.
6. Demonstrate an awareness of the “sense of community” that each religious group develops.
7. Demonstrate an awareness of the contributions that religious groups have made to society.
8. Demonstrate a willingness to plan projects or activities that demonstrate respect and tolerance.

Module: Messages in Media

Values to be emphasized: Honesty, Responsibility

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an awareness of the types and purposes of media.
2. Demonstrate an awareness of the influences that media have on an individual’s life.
3. Demonstrate an awareness of the global impact of media.
4. Demonstrate an awareness of how honesty and responsibility are involved in the interaction between the individual and the media.
5. Determine whether the standards imposed on media, both externally and internally, are sufficient to demonstrate responsibility.
6. Demonstrate the skills necessary for making positive changes in an individual’s use of the media.

Ethics C.4 (Junior High)
(Revised 1989)

PART 3: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A. Values Important to Me

The student will be able to:

1. Discuss personal convictions in the context of community values.
2. Demonstrate awareness that individuals do not always consistently act on their values.
3. Appreciate that one must be willing to maintain ethical values in the face of pressure.
4. Demonstrate a willingness to revise or alter personal convictions on the basis of new understandings.
5. Demonstrate awareness that acting on values involves consequences.
6. Distinguish between responsible and irresponsible behaviour.

B. Reflections

The student will be able to:

1. Understand that relationships involve interactions, attitudes and emotions.
2. Demonstrate responsibility for chosen actions.
3. Evaluate personal contributions and the contributions of others toward making positive changes.
4. Appreciate that he or she is involved in decisions and choices that have ethical implications and consequences.
5. Demonstrate commitment to values such as respect, responsibility, fairness, tolerance, honesty, kindness, forgiveness, commitment to democratic ideals, loyalty.
6. Share insights gained from the course through a culminating presentation of their learned experiences.

3. MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Throughout the Grade 8 Ethics course students are encouraged to be involved with activities and projects that will contribute positively to the lives of others.

In Part 1 of the course students are introduced to the concept that they can “make a difference” in their community. Learning expectations are incorporated into Parts 2 and 3 focussing on this experiential component of the course. “Making a Difference” occupies ten hours of the seventy-five hour course.

4. TIME ALLOCATION

The Grade 8 Ethics course was developed as a 75-hour course. The following chart indicates the suggested distribution of time for the teaching of this course.

PART		TIME
Part 1: Establishing the Challenge	M a k i n g	10 hours
Part 2: The Community (minimum of two)	a	45 hours (15 hours each)
Module: Fairness and the Law (Fairness/Justice) 15 hours	D	
Module: Winning and Losing (Fairness/Justice, Loyalty) 15 hours	i f e r e	
Module: Religion and Values (Respect, Tolerance) 15 hours	n c e	
Module: Messages in Media (Honesty, Responsibility) 15 hours	- 10	
Part 3: Social Responsibility	h o u r s	10 hours
SUBTOTAL	10 hrs	65 hours
TOTAL		75 hours

5. REQUIRED/ELECTIVE COMPONENTS

The Grade 8 Ethics course has two components. The **required** component encompasses the knowledge, skills and attitudes that all students should be expected to acquire. A minimum of 70 per cent of the time must address this “required” component.

The **elective** component provides opportunities to adapt and enhance instruction to meet the diverse needs and abilities of students. It provides for enrichment and additional assistance to individual students as necessary.

The maximum time allotment for the elective component of the Grade 8 Ethics course shall be 30 per cent of the instructional time.

